Algirdas Šeškus was born on December 4, 1945 in Vilnius. In 1968–1970, he studied in the Vilnius Art School. In Moscow, he completed a cinematography course, worked as a television and radio operator. From 1979, he has been a member of the Lithuanian Society of Art Photography, since 1989 – the Union of the Lithuanian Art Photographers. In 2005, the photographer was awarded a status of art creator.

Exhibitions:
1980 Algirdas Šeškus’ debut in the photograph exhibition help by young photographers of the Lithuanian Society of Art Photography, Vilnius Photography Gallery, Vilnius
1981 Raimundas Silkus and Algirdas Šeškus painting and photography exhibition, Vilnius Photography Gallery, Vilnius
1984 Algirdas Šeškus painting and Algirdas Šeškus photographs cycle “Portraits of State Russian Drama Theatre actors, directors, composers and painters,” Lithuanian Artists Palace, Vilnius
2000 Algirdas Šeškus photographs cycle “Draudzus, Budvytis and me” expositions “Lithuanian fine arts 2000. Photography” in the exhibition ”Test: 11 vs 1” (curator Margarita Matušytė), Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius
2013 Algirdas Šeškus photographs of 55th Venice contemporary art Biennale in Lithuania and Cyprus national pavilions project “oO” (curator Raimundas Malašauskas), Venice Sports Palace “Giobatta Gianquinto,” Venice
2013 Algirdas Šeškus’ photographs exhibition (curators Algirdas Šeškus and Malvina Jelinskaitė), Kaunas Photography Gallery, Kaunas
2013 Variations in shades of grey – Le Château d’Eau, Toulouse

This exhibition showed a selection of his black-and-white images from the 1970s that depicted everyday life through an impressionistic and individualistic style. With his photographs, Šeškus chooses not to follow any particular aesthetic practice or theory but instead choosing “amateurism”. This has led him to take photographs that are often out of focus, showing everyday situations portraying what could be considered boring subjects, blurred with haphazard compositions. However, his photographs often convey a sense of the intimate.
Seeking to understand the phenomenon of the Lithuanian photographer Algirdas Šeškus, one should not focus on the artist’s standard career that is best described by the annually and consistently replenished list of exhibitions and albums. Šeškus’ biography of an artist evolved in a rather complicated way, starting from an almost imperceptible ascent, followed by an obvious decline, then by short-term breakdowns, an extensive many-year pause up to a sudden jump and an infinite expansion. His name marks the crucial Soviet period in the development of the Lithuanian photography, yet the artist’s first retrospective exhibition was held only in 2010. He is considered one of the classics of the Lithuanian photography, although for a long time, the author’s work has not been properly investigated and acknowledged. For several decades, everyone was satisfied seeing and remembering just a handful of Šeškus’ works; as a matter of fact, the well-known photographs are not nearly the most important; the truly interesting is the entire huge archive preserved in the Šeškus’ storage. After unsuccessful attempts with his avant-garde (anti)aesthetics to get a record in the general creative field of photographers, the author withdrew, and for nearly thirty years was silent; still, having returned to the professional artistic space, he has not changed his expression strategies; but, on the contrary, expanded them.

On the curve of the artist’s complicated creative trajectory, a few specific points may be placed. After completing the cinematography course in Moscow and working as a Lithuanian television operator, Šeškus realized himself as a creator in the art of photography, which he invaded with new ideas, ignoring the already exhausted stylistic modernist traditions of the time. The artist of quite a bizarre origin was given a chance to make his first steps of exhibition held by young photographers of the Lithuanian Society of Art Photography. His first works displayed in public revealed a new and inadequate to Soviet culture phenomenon, which some accepted rather reservedly, while others were hostile. There were attempts to study and analyse him, but displaying such anomaly to the public, especially abroad, where Lithuanian photography represented the Soviet Union, was difficult and sometimes impossible. Here is an example: for the Frankfurt book fair, the Lithuanian Society of Art Photography compiled a collection of photographs, where among works by the well-known photographers, Šeškus’ creation was also included; however, after Glavlit censorship, all the photographs by this artist (17 pieces) were excluded. Out of a long list of authors, he was the only one rejected. Another remarkable fact of Šeškus’ creative life took place in 1983. In Vilnius, together with the artist Raimundas Sližys, a joint exhibition of photography and painting was held, where the two artists with similar worldviews by employing different means showed “what in a human and his environment is not exactly beautiful, even banal, gray.” The juxtaposition of the two fields of art for the first time in Lithuania established the photography in the interdisciplinary field. In 1984, Šeškus implemented the last “righteous” assault of the photography bastion; together with his former neighbor, Alfonas Budvytis, they created a cycle of portraits of the Russian Drama Theater actors, directors, composers and artists. The authors having generated progressive ideas looked at the government request to make portraits of the theater people innovatively. Despite the standards of portraying public figures, they experimented with characters of protagonists, types, composition of photographs. The collection of sixty unusual portraits as an artistic project was shown in Vilnius, and in the following year, it was exhibited in Moscow.

The entire Šeškus’ creation seems to have no direction – it does not have themes, or clearly expressed authorial approach.

The photographer demonstrates the position of a passive observer and critically evaluates the representations of metaphorical reality, balances between artistic nihilism and a creative act of fetishism. His “amateurish” aesthetics manifests itself through blurry and compositionally chaotic shots, minimalistic form of prints, opting for an uninteresting content. In his works, the author does not show any efforts to represent the reality in an artistic way, on the contrary, he disorganizes it and makes this in a simplest way by not paying attention to the environment that is being photographed; he does not seek the exceptional events or outstanding moments in it. “By photographing, that is, by participating in the reaction, I cannot avoid a video-reagent, yet it seems that an entirely accurate image is almost unnecessary for the photography.” By declaring such concept, Šeškus reveals the intention to conquer the inertness of photography, as a means of technical documentation. The photographer’s method is simple – there is no need to make up artificial practices, or abuse of material, just to listen carefully and follow the inner self. He states that it is not what is being photographed, but the very act of taking the photograph that is immortalized. Emphasizing the “amateurish” stylistics of his works, the author does not give them titles, does not indicate the exact place and date of creation. However, this is not some naive approach of an amateur dilettante, this is a conceptual thinking, showing not the opportunities of development of the individual identity, but a uniform artist’s program. Photographers’ style’s base to that of Jonas Mekas journal film, after all, he sees and thinks like a cinematographer. However, Šeškus’ artistic ideology resonates in a slightly different manner than he himself could foresee. One cannot help noticing those nostalgic footprints of daily routine, recognizable or astonishing, sometimes amusing household scenes of ordinary townsmen of the past, whose reality and present have been captured by the photograph. Photographic reality prompts our memories. It is identical to our memory. Only highlighted and fixed. We do not sort, polish, adorn or control it, but just let it in. What color are our memories of grey citizens’ lives? Šeškus’ photographs are grey. Sometimes darker, sometimes lighter, sometimes brighter, sometimes even glowing. The artist’s “critical moment” has nothing to do with “being on time and in the right place.” Because it always and at any time is “critical.” Therefore, for Šeškus, it does not matter what kind of camera, what kind of developing material, what kind of film, what kind of photo paper, which season, what kind of weather, what kind of light. Because he always manages to snap up that passing by, flowing by, swimming by, flying past, slipping and rolling by reality, to capture it on the way and accommodate in the photograph, where it snows in winter, and in summer after the rain, it is refreshingly cool.

Margarita Matulytė